



The Hills Give Promise  
—LYRICS—

CARMUS: *A Symphonic Poem*

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ROBERT SILLIMAN HILLYER



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HYMN TO THE SUN



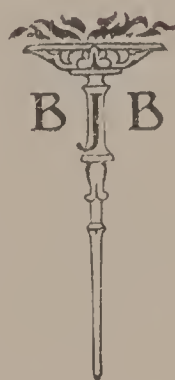
# The Hills Give Promise

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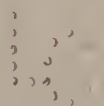
A VOLUME OF LYRICS TOGETHER WITH  
CARMUS: A Symphonic Poem

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By ROBERT SILLIMAN HILLYER  
WITH FIVE DRAWINGS BY BEATRICE STEVENS



1923



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*TO LILLIAN STANLEY HILLYER*





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## BOOK II

### Carmus: A Symphonic Poem

Canto I. The boy Carmus stands alone in the mortal Fens. He watches for an adventurous ship bearing dreams of wider lands, but the coast is shunned by mariners of the open sea, who dread the tidal shoals. He is filled with loneliness, for the spring urges him toward the eternal sea, and he cannot escape beyond the ebb and flood of time. In the twilight he beholds ghosts of drowned men, and a small flame approaching him from the west. He thinks it to be only a phantom of the marshes, but when it is revealed close at hand, he is aware of a great beauty, the face of his immortal Comrade, and, leaving the flesh, he partakes of an eternal delight, though beneath him the material world is riven with storm. His father finds him asleep in the marshes, and awakes him, bidding him reenter the material world. He half forgets the ecstasy, but he cannot rest, for as time passes, the desire for reunion with his immortal comrade grows ever stronger, filling him with a divine discontent.

Interlude—Ocean

Canto II. Spring follows spring, and the youth Carmus still searches for his immortal comrade, and watches the sunset agony



of death over the Fens. He beholds a light in the east, and thinks it to be his dawn, but it is only the moonrise of mortal desire. He sets up toward the mystic city of Istis, hoping to find his beloved by the river of contemplation, but Istis, too, is subject to the moon. And he meets only the images of his own fear. He travels on to the Christian city of Nalda, and in his ignorance believes the cathedral to be cut from the living mountain. He is inspired by fair ceremonies to seek his living comrade, and finds a god whom the priests have crucified, and runs into the street, where the witch-woman of Vallamaris is waiting for him. She tells him of the living god who has escaped the wiles of the priests and bids him disport himself in her city, hoping thereby to go back herself, since those who have worn out their time in Vallamaris can return only through the magic of the chaste. In Vallamaris he beholds the spectacle of earthly delights which he does not understand, although a great drunkenness of spirit bids him discard his identity and merge into the crowd, where everyone is but a looking glass reflecting his neighbour; until the witch-woman of Vallamaris, disguised with the reflection of his own purity, bewitches him, and in a wonderful manner transforms

him into a part of the jocund carnival while a cynic music perverts the theme of his wanderings into a dance. But the charm breaks when the winter comes, and once more Carmus is alone.

Interlude—The Song of Frema, the Earth-Spirit  
Canto III

The man Carmus, after long bewilderment, has reached the Venily of inspiration and fulfilment, where he tells of his journey to the divine intelligence; how when the wind swept away the revellers, he resolved to push on toward Venily, and the blizzard caught him, and phantoms pursued him, until he should have perished but for the earth-maiden, Frema, who delivered him from death, and in whom again he thought to find his beloved. Again disillusioned, he was driven forth by his unrest at the coming of spring. In the twilight he saw what he thought to be the lamp of his immortal comrade, and was led by the false light into the midst of battle, a battle of ghosts rehearsed endlessly by the living dead. In the morning he sought to return to the love of Frema, but he could never return, for that was long ago and scattered in ashes.

## Interlude

### Canto IV

The old man Carmus, at the end of his journey, sits on the Mountain, and beholds the sunset over Venily. As darkness comes on, he sees ever clearer, as the memories of his life return in their true meaning. His immortal comrade is there also, but he is no longer impatient to see her, for he knows that the hour of reunion is near, and desires to gaze once again at the unreal pageant of mortality from which he has climbed, with a great pity for those who shall vanish, and a delight in his own divinity. So he watches till the Dawn.





BOOK I.

THE HILLS GIVE PROMISE



## TOWARD MORNING

Along the street, the swaying lights  
Turn wan and sick against the grey.  
Strange mornings follow stranger nights.....  
And who shall meet me with the day?

The world, a vast, deserted nave  
Wherein stale incense faintly clings  
Is void of sacraments that save,  
Is empty of aspiring wings.

Only the echo of my feet,  
That rises, rings, and dies away,  
Only the desolated street.....  
And who shall meet me with the day?

But no, not utterly alone  
I gaze against the foggy air;  
Thinner than mist, sharper than stone,  
White faces gather round me there.

Faces that I have seen before  
Burst from an age's memories,  
Faces I knew on what strange shore?  
By breakers of what stranger seas?

Faces that hurry from the brain  
And take their independent way  
Forth into darkness, pale as rain. . . . .  
And who shall meet me with the day?

There are evil dreams with scathing lips  
That flutter by in a flaunting dance;  
There are divine companionships,  
And there are shadows of romance.

And one or two there are that touch  
My spirit with a killing thrust.  
Ah, we have suffered overmuch,  
Children of beauty, children of dust.



Whither your path, poor boastful things  
Trooping fantastically to play  
Your pantomime of withered springs?.....  
And who shall meet me with the day?

Go forth, the long reluctant east  
Yields to the summer sun at last.  
The altar glimmers with the Feast,  
To-morrow chains the captive past.

The morning wave with radiant strength  
Washes my heart in rainbow spray,  
And down the street's amazing length  
Comes One to meet me with the Day.

## HYMN TO THE SUN

(After the "Chapters of Coming Forth by Day,"  
commonly known as the "Book of the Dead.")

Homage to thee, O Ra! at thy tremendous rising!  
Thou risest! thou shinest! the heavens are rolled  
aside!

Thou art the King of Gods, thou art the All-com-  
prising;

From thee we come, in thee are deified.

Thy priests go forth at dawn; they wash their hearts  
with laughter;

Divine winds move in music across thy golden  
strings;

At dusk the gods embrace thee, as every cloudy  
rafter

Flames with reflected colour from thy wings.

Thou sailest over the zenith, and thy heart rejoices;  
Thy Morning Boat and Evening Boat with fair  
winds meet together;  
Before thy face the goddess Maht exalts her fateful  
feather,  
And at thy name the halls of Anu ring with voices.

O Thou Perfect! Thou Eternal! Thou Only One!  
Great Hawk that fliest with the flying sun!  
Between the Turquoise Sycamores thou smilest  
young for ever,  
Thine image shining in the bright, celestial River.

Thy rays are on all faces; thou art inscrutable;  
Age after age thy life renews its eager prime;  
Change whirls its dust beneath thee; thou art im-  
mutable;  
Maker of Time, thyself beyond all time!

Thou passest through the portals that close behind  
the night,  
Quickening all the dead that sleep in sorrow.  
The True of Word, the Quiet Heart arise to drink  
thy light;  
Thou art To-day and Yesterday; thou art To-  
morrow!

Homage to thee, O Ra! who bringest life from slum-  
ber!  
Thou risest! Thou shinest! Thy radiant face appears!  
Millions of years have passed, we cannot count  
their number,  
Millions of years shall come. Thou art above the  
years!



## HYMN FOR SUNRISE

(After Sa Seti Vernlai Venilian)

Thrice beautiful, my sunrise friend,  
Hunting down the shadow-clingers,  
Chasing silence to an end  
With thy ranks of shining singers;  
Beautiful, companion me,  
On the land, on the sea,  
Dawn on black eternity.

When the bells of midnight tend  
With the tide toward deadly shores,  
When the snakes of darkness bend  
From the turquoise sycamores;  
Beautiful, appear again,  
On the hill, on the plain,  
Crown thyself, great sovereign!

I, thy crown, grant me the ray  
That shall stab the heart of night;  
Shining sword of final day,  
Blood of alchemistic light;  
Beautiful, arise from sleep,  
In the sky, in the deep,  
Pasture me, thy single sheep.

## VAHRAMES AND HIS STORY

I am from Mount Ararat,  
My right eye has a squint;  
But my people from the plains of royal Egypt came;  
From the green vales of Hapi came my race.

With them came the Blessed Cat  
Whose eyes of blazing flint  
Led them forth and gave the wilderness a name,  
And made of this dark hill a Holy Place.

You know how once the Hyksos sat  
On Egypt's throne, and sent  
Triumphant Ahmes forth in banishment and shame,  
Ahmes, the son of Thoth, the Bright-in-Grace.

My fathers saw the true Divine  
Uncrownëd and defiled;  
They sat in silence peering with narrow eyes aslant  
Upward where five long knives lay on the shelf.

The Shepherd Kings, the filthy swine,  
Spat on them and they smiled;  
O the last Hyksos lolled at ease and was content  
Drinking the sugary wine of El-Kadelph.

They knew how he befouled the shrine  
Of Bashtu, and beguiled  
The priestess, aye, and but for them he may have  
          meant  
To desecrate the Sacred Cat Herself.

Night and a fiery aureole  
Hanging above the Gate;  
O have you ever listened to the starry song  
And heard the far thin music, O my Brother?

Night and a dagger in the soul,  
And mossy gods that wait  
For vengeance,—ah, my people's arms were slim  
          and strong,  
They smiled darkly across at one another.

Through the temple dusk they stole,  
The Hyksos lay in state,—  
Snoring in Bubastis! . . .the gods had suffered  
    long. . . .  
He lies there still for aught I know, my Brother.

There is many another tale  
Of footsore wanderings,  
And how the Mighty Cat from Her Tameran shrine  
Came forth and led them over the hot plain.

And brought them here to this green vale  
Of groves and pleasant springs,  
And on the mountain sides cool vineyards for our  
    wine,  
Sloping to rolling meadows rich with grain.

Here the eternal nightingale  
Memorably sings  
Beneath the cloudy moon, till in the night's decline  
Come intervals of silver slanting rain.

Friend, friend, you think me mad, and yet  
Between us two there lies  
Only this much, that from a waning world you come,  
But from Tamera came my deathless race.

Think not her living Sun has set,  
For in new Easts arise  
New dawns, and soon the veiling mist shall vanish  
from  
The sleepy desert's heavy-lidded face.

And you in all your pride forget  
How near at hand there lies  
The same, the worldless, the inevitable home,  
The starry sands, the wanderer's resting-place.

Out of the midnight clouds that press  
My soul to death, I hear  
A voice among the sinking stars that ever sings  
Of Egypt and the Grey Cat of the Nile.



The sweetness of lost holiness  
Comforts me as appear  
The shadows of the patient form with folded wings,  
And the lone light in darkness of Her smile.

O Living-Dead, you cannot guess  
How infinitely clear  
I hear a voice among the sinking stars that sings,  
“Again I come, after a little while.”

## A TRIUMPH

I rode, thrice-crowned, into my capital.  
Behind me rode my knights, five thousand strong.  
From wall to battlemented wall  
Thundered tremendous song.  
Cheers swept my people, who had come to throng  
The conqueror's way with praise and festival.

Strange beasts marched solemnly in my parade,  
Jingling with jewelled cloths from captive lands,  
And slaves with peacock plumes to shade  
The imperial face and hands,  
And lovely royal prisoners, and bands  
Of hostages, half-haughty, half-afraid.

From every window rippled tapestry;  
Sweet-scented garlands hung from house to house;  
The shouting children climbed to see  
Among the ilex boughs,  
Until it seemed as if a fair carouse  
Had blossomed on each dark, triumphal tree.

But suddenly my heart turned slowly round  
And stopped. My face was wet with starting fear.  
Above the noise a little sound  
Beat keenly in my ear,  
Grew slowly to a voice, and words came clear  
Over a hush wherein all life was drowned.

“Now is the moment beautiful, O King,  
To leave your triumph; now you will be all  
A shining memory of spring  
Unblighted by the fall.  
Come away and dream in my oblivious hall,  
For the garlands in the wind are withering.”

One shadow crossed my path; the city blurred.  
Another quenched the faces one by one  
Like final torches; then a third  
Careened against the sun.

“Strike louder music if my play be done!”  
The silence walled me thickly. No one heard.

. . . “And after you have slept, you shall arise  
A King no more, but one who travels through  
The world, singing what never dies,  
Though none give ear to you.  
In secret music life shall flower anew;  
But here, the dead. . . .” Night crashed against  
my eyes.

New day has dawned. My people are blown dust.  
Even the memory of my realm is lost.  
I wander, singing as I must  
A homesick music tossed  
To the empty winds and the outlands white with  
frost. . . .  
Sometimes I tremble with an old distrust.

## THE TEMPLE

Chaste and eternal colonnade,  
Beauty's high and ruined throne,  
In time's tangled everglade  
You alone  
Shall not be foul and overgrown.  
Alien to our dying generation,  
We turn to you, O living stone,  
For vindication.

Still on your altars, unarrayed,  
Where mouldy leaves are idly blown,  
The ancient faith sits undismayed  
Over the strawn  
Dust of the gods that were her own.  
Still shall we turn with exquisite oblation  
To you, O fair and overthrown,  
For vindication.

War and lust of war have laid  
Waste this world from zone to zone;  
Hideous piety has made  
Men disown  
All the wonders life has shown.  
From these years of sordid desolation  
We turn to you, O bright unknown,  
For vindication.

Man once made you; you atone  
For all his folly and his desecration;  
He turns to you, O living stone,  
For vindication.



## THE INTRUDER

It is not, Death, that we resent your power;  
Life moves by that as well as by increase,  
But you invade our welfare and our peace,  
You threaten us before your appointed hour.  
We know you, sombre master of release  
From all the sick repinings that devour  
Our later years, but why should you deflower  
Our youth as well, and bid the music cease?

God knows the ages of our kind are dust;  
We drift from war to war, from hate to hate,  
And all our loves still falter into lust;  
But there are rifts among the clouds of fate  
Through which the sun might come if you would  
    wait,  
And let us dance our moth-dance down the gust.

## EPITAPH

Here by this quiet pool,  
Under the quiet sun,  
    Frema remembers  
How rose the beautiful  
Lord from oblivion,  
    Flame from the embers.

She dreams in light among  
Legions of mortals whom  
    Darkness convinces;  
Dreams, till she hear the young  
Prince by her lonely tomb  
    Calling his Princess.

## FLOWER-MARKET, COPENHAGEN

In the grey November haze  
Gold and scarlet flowers shine  
Like a moveless line  
Of torches all ablaze.  
Down the long row  
Behind the flowers, glow  
The faces of old women, framed  
In shawls as gay as any garden.  
Blatant youth is shamed  
Where age is so serenely young;  
These faces never harden,  
These smiles have never learned deceit;  
The years go by on stealthy feet,  
And never trample souls among  
The quiet byways of a garden.  
They smile at me, hold up their prize  
Bouquets to catch my wandering eyes:  
“Good-day, good-day; it’s going to rain!”  
I nod, and swing my cane.  
Chrysanthemum and holly bough,  
Late daisy, fern, and pale carnation,—  
I can’t commit myself just now!  
St. Anthony’s supreme temptation,  
Had the tempter known his powers,  
Would have been a flower-stall;  
Dear ladies, I’m in love with all  
Of you, and all your flowers!

This old woman brought to town  
Her good cat, Hilda, to assist;  
They talk, she looking kindly down  
On the grey whiskers rimed with mist  
And great gold eyes, while Hilda's purrs  
Denote what happiness is hers.  
Flower-cat and woman, who  
Could decently resist the two?  
How much for these red dahlias here?  
Two kroner? "Yes, they're cheap this year;—  
Ah, thank you!" She adjusts her shawl  
To shelter Hilda from the showers.  
Down the shining line I go;  
Flowers and faces in a row,  
Through the drizzle smile and glow;  
Dear ladies, I'm in love with all  
Of you, and all your flowers!

## ON THE BOULEVARD

Two old men walked together down the street,  
Two late survivors of atrocious years,  
Comparing memories of sharp deceit,  
And crimes wherein they were the pioneers.

A child ran by the cronies, and looked back.  
They turned to one another then, and smiled,  
Smudging her whiteness with imagined black,  
And whispering cynic futures for the child.

Seven score years grinned shamelessly at five.  
Half-wondering, half shy, she turned again,  
Thinking that if her father were alive  
He'd be just like those kind old gentlemen.

## THE TRYST

Neither spoke; the silence clung,  
They were old that had been young.

Through notched hills the moonlight came;  
Two lights plumbed the dark below;  
Everything was just the same,  
Even the quiet silver glow  
On the shingle roofs like snow;—  
But a stranger bore her name.

Here where young desire was mated  
To the memory of a face;  
Where long vigil desolated  
Every beauty of the place,  
Came at last the hour of grace,  
But not he, the long-awaited.



There they stood, and there they slew  
Each the hope the other nourished.  
Ghosts of flesh and blood, they drew  
Shadowy life from shades that perished,  
And the dreams that they had cherished  
Seemed the stranger, now they knew.

Neither spoke; the silence clung.  
They were old that had been young.

## ANDANTE

The melody of what has passed  
Blows backward on the evening breeze;  
Beneath dark portals bolted fast  
Against the west,  
I hear faint pipes from overseas  
Playing their music of unrest.

Cease and be silent, wistful reeds;  
I hear you, but I turn away.  
Time, the grey monk, has told his beads,  
And I am locked  
Outside the Gate of Yesterday,  
That would not open if I knocked.

Ahead the path is deep and black  
And empty, but there is no choice. . . .  
The dusty traveller turns his back  
On doors of peace,  
And hears through leagues of night a voice  
That follows him and will not cease.

## LARGO

Wherever I seek my path, there failure is before me;  
He waits me at the final crest of the sloping day,  
Holding forth to my sweating hands the shrivelled  
    branches  
From which the peach blooms of desire have fallen  
    away.

Tired and flushed at dusk from unrewarded climbing,  
Beneath warm summer forests I stretch myself and  
    sleep;  
Waking under the midnight, I am the jest of winter;  
Against the pines the drifted snow is piling deep.

Wherever I would dream, there failure is before me,  
And whither I have struggled, there his strong wings  
    fly;  
He plucks the familiar star that I capture in night  
    waters,  
And sets it back in voids of inaccessible sky.

## THE TREADMILL

Here you sit in this autumn room,  
Three floors over the city street,  
Clatter of horses, blaring horns,  
Cries of children, patter of feet;  
Here you sit with your life to arrange,  
Moving pawns on the board of doom.

Wondering, what is it all about?  
Dull detail and grandiose scheme,  
Frantic thinking forward and back  
For a meal or some romantic dream,  
Ghastly round that will not change  
Till the mind grows black and the sun goes out.

Here you sit in this darkening room,  
Wondering, what is it all about?  
Moving pawns on the board of doom  
Till the mind grows black and the sun goes out.

## THRENODY

I made a slow lament for you, lost magic  
Of schoolboy love and dreams in shadowed places,  
Where passed in visible parade, the tragic  
Desires of vanished gods and women's faces.

On violins beneath long undisputed  
New England orchards sombred by the spirit  
Of endless autumn, I awoke the muted  
Strings of your lament, but none could hear it.

Except, perhaps, one passerby, who skirted  
The upland fields in that avoided spot;  
And, marvelling at the music in deserted  
Orchards, hurried on, and soon forgot.

## NEW ENGLAND

Shutters bang in the wind outside;  
Cobwebs hang from the mildewed walls;  
Stale, damp mould in the lifeless cold;  
Doors flung wide to the darkened halls.

Love and strength of the new, keen race  
Lie full length where the weeds grow high,  
All things swept to the past except  
This ruined place the wind roars by.

Blank disaster of empty windows;  
Broken plaster strewn on the floor;  
Darkness spills from the wild, bleak hills,  
And the winter wind blows under the door.



## A LETTER

Last night I wrote a letter to my friend:  
I said, "Come back, we two are getting old;  
Our separate lives wear on; the years are cold,  
And loneliness grows bitter toward the end."  
I called you back, but you shall not behold  
Those wise, sad words that my desire has penned;  
Last night I wrote what I shall never send,  
The page your white hands never shall unfold.

There in my desk it lies; pride guards the key;  
And pride, alas, is stronger than desire.  
Years hence perhaps some stranger, pityingly,  
Will yield the faded secret to the fire,  
Where it will join in dust those separate dead,  
Sorrow who wrote and Love who never read.

## YESTERDAY

Across the sand the sparkle dies away,  
The sun, the waves, the ebbing afternoon  
Slide westward, and the shadows on the dune  
Deepen against the caravan of grey.  
But we who stand here have become immune  
To all this sombre glory; we who stay  
See but the passing of another day,  
And from our summers, yet another June.

O, we had spoken, we had answered once  
To this vast query that has found us dumb;  
Out of our quickened spirit some response,  
Some hugely eager challenge would have come,  
Where, blinded by our wisdom, now we glance  
Unmoved upon this infinite romance.

## SUMMER'S END

And now at sunset, ripples flecked with gold  
Leap lightly over the profounder blue;  
The wind is from the north, and days are few  
That still divide us from the winter cold.  
O, it was easy in the morning dew  
To make the vow that never should be old,  
But now at dusk the words are not so bold,—  
Thus have I learned. How fares the hour with you?

A heron rises from the trembling sedge,  
His vigil at an end. Mine too is done.  
A late sail twinkles on the watery edge,  
And up the shore lights flicker one by one.  
Seasons will change before tomorrow's sun,  
So speaks the dune-grass on the windy ledge.

## THE SENTRY SPEAKS

The autumn equinox has reached my land,  
And on the sundial weary night and day  
Resolve their quarrel for the nonce, and lay  
Twelve hours of sun and dark on either hand.  
The yellow smoke of fern is blowing away  
Over the hilltops with the vagrant band  
Of southward flying ducks. But understand  
Though all these follow summer, I shall stay.

Go thou with them, I know thy hopes are set  
On warmer gardens than this fading place,  
But someone must remain, lest earth forget  
Her calendar, and sleep in the embrace  
Of endless winter; lest the snow efface  
The river's memory of the violet.

## BEWILDERMENT

Now all the autumn night is vast and still;  
Curled round our feet in valleys white with haze,  
And from the tall composure of this hill  
We watch the constellations go their ways.  
Below, the dead are sleeping in their shrouds,  
Nor ever wake to shadow our delight;  
And quiet as the dead, the alien crowds  
Slumber in ashen cities all the night.  
We two alone are living, we alone  
Sail on the world's high deck through starry seas.  
Nourished by love, our human souls have grown  
Into the stature of divinities.  
We two are Life; all else is past and dead....  
Who spake these words? What mean the things he  
said?

## WINTER NOCTURNE

Some of that August day's long-dead delight  
Came back to me, as on a winter hill  
I saw red sunset fall away and spill  
Its scattered jewels on the lap of night.

We two had always been so calm, so still,  
That silence was not lonely, and despite  
The shadow deepening over snowy white,  
A warmth, as of your presence, smote the chill.

Whatever men may call the real, the true,  
This much I know indeed, that an immense  
And actual radiance such as only you  
Have ever given to my mortal sense  
Gleamed on the hillside and then vanished hence;  
And all that winter night the south wind blew.

## NOCTURNE

There was a fountain in the court  
That played all night,  
But the night was short,  
And the morning grey.  
There was a whip-poor-will that sang  
In the wan moonlight,  
And music sprang  
From the shattered spray.  
I lay in the grass and touched your hand;  
You drew it away.  
You understand  
The flames that start from the touch of a hand,  
And you drew it away;  
And desire froze at the sorry part  
I was forced to play,  
And fear like a north wind fanned  
My tropic heart,  
Lest you arise and fly me.  
I held my breath and heard  
Moth wings whir by me,  
I heard a petal fall by the garden wall,  
And a dreaming bird  
Stir in imagined flight.

There was a fountain in the court  
That played all night,—  
But the night was short.



## AFTER SOME YEARS

We do not suffer much now; it is over.  
We wanted to forget; we have forgotten.  
We tore our hearts with healing; they are healed.

You have gained peace, you who were once a lover,  
The garlands of your sacrifice are rotten;  
Your garden has become a clover field.

Only at times, in intervals of quiet,  
When music gravely claims the twilight air,  
And melts the sinews of some bitter thong,

Your heart feels something of the stress and riot  
That flung it between rapture and despair;  
Something awakes that has been sleeping long.

You say: I am so strong now, I could chance  
To play with these old things a while, and taste  
The occult savour that I knew so well,

Yet, what was this great love,—a strange romance,  
A fierce three autumns, passionately chaste,—  
Youth's customary path, no miracle.

Even that frosty thought, so fugitive,  
Shows what is lost beyond all hope to gain,  
And just how far from love we two have gone.

We did forget, we healed ourselves, we live,  
But we have lost essential joy and pain:  
We lived; we died; and having died, live on.

## ELEGY

### On a Dead Mermaid Washed Ashore at Plymouth Rock

Pallidly sleeping, the Ocean's mysterious daughter  
Lies in the lee of the boulder that shattered her  
    charms.

Dawn rushes over the level horizon of water  
And touches to flickering crimson her face and her  
    arms,

While every scale in that marvelous tail  
Quivers with colour like sun on a Mediterranean  
    sail.

Could you not keep to the ocean that lulls the  
    equator,

Soulless, immortal, and fatally fair to the gaze?  
Or were you called to the North by an ecstasy greater  
Than any you knew in those ancient and terrible  
    days

When all your delight was to flash on the sight  
Of the wondering sailor and lure him to death in the  
    watery night?

Was there, perhaps, on the deck of some far away  
vessel  
A lad from New England whose fancy you failed to  
ensnare?  
Who, born of this virtuous rock, and accustomed to  
wrestle  
With beauty in all of its forms, became your despair,  
And awoke in your breast a mortal unrest  
That dragged you away from the south to your  
death in the cold northwest?

Pallidly sleeping, your body is shorn of its magic,  
But Death gives a soul to whatever is lovely and dies.  
Now Ocean reclaims you again, lest a marvel so  
tragic  
Remain to be mocked by our earthly and virtuous  
eyes,  
And reason redeems already what seems  
Only a fable like all of our strange and beautiful  
dreams.

## LATE SPRING

Blue light of dusk on the windowsill,  
Green sunset light in the sky;  
The cherry tree on our little hill  
Has buried itself in bloom.  
A wounded duck has dropped a quill  
In our yard as he fluttered by.

Where have you gone? I have thought of you  
All day, and your quiet smile.  
I should not have thought,—that much I knew,  
But somehow I am not wise.  
Four years to forget, four years! too few!  
Four lives were too little while.

There is not a breath of wind to-night,  
But I hear the garden stir.  
Down in the darkness out of sight  
It prepares a wild surprise,  
To burst on the world in green and white,  
To smile from a thousand eyes.

Where have you gone? I have sown a crop  
Of dangerous dreams to-day.

I have seen your face. . . . Stop!

You shall not break my peace! . . .

(The cherry tree on the hillock top  
Is white with a starry spray.)

## THE DEMIGOD

I wearied of disaster;  
I swore to murder Fate,  
And make myself the master  
Of my terrene estate.

I slew my foe, and gaily  
Supplanted him I slew,  
And do more damage daily  
Than Fate could ever do.



## ENTOMOLOGY

In August as I lay upon a hill  
I saw black ants and red ones in the grass;  
Well-bred, adept, they laboured with a will,  
And stepped aside to let each other pass.

I saw two battling spiders come to terms  
And skate away without another word;  
I also saw a beetle and three worms,  
Which I just mentioned to a passing bird.

Small jungles, and a ground-mole come to grief,  
(If one can judge by such a skeleton),  
A bob-tailed bug upon a strawberry leaf,  
The which I tickled just to see him run.

These I observed, and many other things,  
But I'll not bore you with particulars;  
At any rate, the afternoon took wings,  
And left the insect, Me, beneath the stars.

## FOR MAISTER GEOFFREY CHAUCER

A bard there was, and that a worthy wight,  
Who, from the time that he began to write,  
Served God and beauty with an humble mind,  
And most of all he knew and loved mankind.  
Laughing he was, and quick at many a jest,  
The Lord loves mirth,—the devil take the rest!  
A simple grace ere wine be poured at dinner,  
A ready hand outstretched to saint and sinner,  
A prayer at times, not lengthy but devout,  
This was our poet's faith without a doubt.  
Travel he loved, and wonders had to tell  
Of royal France and Italy as well,  
And everywhere he went, his furtive pen  
Took down the secrets of his fellow men,  
Their faces and their stories, high and low,  
From lordly Petrarch and Boccaccio  
Unto the meanest villein who could hold  
A tavern audience with the tales he told.  
But with his scrivening, he never swerved  
From duty to King Edward whom he served,  
And though he roamed both France and Italy,  
England was where he always longed to be,  
And thither he returned with magic spoils  
That England might have pleasure of his toils,  
And hear his brave, chivalric stories sung  
By English pilgrims in the English tongue.  
Noble his spirit was, and gay his heart.  
A judge of wine, a master of his art,  
He loved all men, nor was ashamed to show it;  
He was a very parfit gentil poet,  
Gentil in life and parfit in his rhyme,—  
God send us such another in our time!

## “HER OWN SHALL BLESS HER”

By Gate of Autumn at the Muses' Sign,—  
A most rare tavern, hid from vulgar fame,—  
Each year we gossips gather round the flame,  
I and some roystering young friends of mine.  
There through the night, with many an antick game,  
We sport and chirp and cap the noble line;  
And every year, in turn, we pledge the wine,  
The speakers changing, but their words the same:

“Poet and learned clerk and mariner,  
I give you Gloriana!” Every ghost  
In Muses' Tavern by the Gate of Death  
Leaps to his feet and drinks, while through the blur  
Of time's too many voices, rings the toast:  
Our Sovereign Shepherdess, Elizabeth!

## EIGHT PASTORALS

### I

Spring, put on your golden sandals,  
Stride across the waning day,  
Then at twilight chase the vandals  
From our ruined world away.  
Clear our heaven where the seven  
Constellations watch and pray.

Melt the icy heart of winter,  
Soothe the forest, tempest-tossed.  
Though the shafts of moonlight splinter  
On the crystals of the frost,  
Make earth tingle with a single  
Dream from all that she has lost.

Shod in beauty, swift newcomer,  
Touch me also with your wand,  
That I may divine the summer  
In the first tight-folded frond,  
From one tender hint, the splendour  
Of the garden just beyond.

## II

Will you laugh at me to-day,  
If I come to you and say,  
“I can touch you with a magic  
That will steal your hate away”?

Can I hope that you will see  
Friendship in your enemy?  
Even if you do, I warrant,  
You will mock the more at me.

I should so much like to try.  
But indeed I'd rather die  
Than be put to such confusion,—  
I had better pass you by.

## III

Trees turn silver to the gust,  
Water whitens on the pond,  
Thick blue shadow drifts between  
The birches and the hill beyond,  
So smoky dark that every frond  
Of fern is luminously green.

With each unexpected thrust  
Of wind from the descending cloud,  
Comes the sound of leafy surf  
Where forest billows heave and crowd,  
And a meadow-lark, with loud  
Alarum, startles from the turf.

Now the sky breaks overhead.  
Strip, and set your body free  
To the tingling rods of rain.  
There is no one here to see,  
No one here but you and me  
Dancing down the livid plain.

Water splashes where we tread;  
Lightning flashes as we spin  
White against the purple storm.  
Drink the keen sensation in  
Over all your gleaming skin,  
For the sunlight will be warm.



#### IV

It is October in our hearts.  
The vineyards of the years are ripe.  
From thinning forests Pan departs,  
And we shall never hear his pipe  
Playing across the hill.

O it was well to drink our fill  
Of pleasure while the sun was high,  
And it is well beneath the still  
Suspense of twilight-heavy sky  
To drink our fill of sleep.

The hush that follows song is deep,  
Far deeper than the song was gay,  
And autumn pasturing ghostly sheep  
Among the fields of yesterday  
Is shepherd of our dreams.



Heap the dead leaves beside the streams  
Where youth has heard the summer song;  
Heap the bonfire that redeems  
The dead who wake in light, and throng  
The shadow where it darts. . . .  
It is October in our hearts.

V

Drearily the leaves fall over all our valleys,  
Dripping from the forest on the tall, mute hill;  
Orange light is leaking down the bare-boughed alleys  
Upon the russet shadow where the leaves lie still.

Breathless in the dim brake, desolate November  
Watches how the dark woods silently are thinned;  
Scattered on the brown earth, withered seeds re-  
member  
Hanging in the sunlight and swinging in the wind;

Myriads of dreams that will sparkle out of slumber,  
Clear as nether stars beneath another summer sky,—  
But stronger is the hold of the leaves that encumber  
The weary feet of pilgrims who know not where to  
die.

## VI

Here in the field beside the wood  
The grass is withered where he stood  
From dawn till dark day after day,  
Watching and listening, until  
Wasted with loneliness he lay  
Under the autumn twilight-grey.  
His sheep are scattered over the hill.

When eyes were blind and lips were dumb,  
Then did she think of him, and come  
Back to the pastureland they knew  
And meet a phantom in the chill  
Morass of sedges white with dew?—  
But miles are long and years are few.  
His sheep are scattered over the hill.

Here in the field beside the wood  
The grass is withered where he stood.

## VII

Great, patient calm of autumn trees  
Against the horizontal sun;  
Most moving of life's tragedies  
Till life itself be done.

The night will give you other fields  
And beauties too immense for tears;  
The night will forge you starry shields  
To guard you from your fears.

But here beneath the patient trees  
Twisted and huge against the sun,  
Life and its long futilities  
That never should have been begun  
Fall withered, and are done.

## VIII

The dark red winter woods are bleak  
With something that they dare not speak.  
Silent they stand, and will not stir  
To greet the hurrying messenger  
Who passes on across the hill,  
Leaving them desolate and still.

What memories of summer hymns  
Are frozen in those leafless limbs?  
What secrets, folded in the bud,  
Lie hidden, till the bursting flood  
Of resurrection call them forth  
When younger lovers wander north?

Yet, in this January hour,  
We care not if tomorrow's flower  
Waits eager-petaled to arise  
Or with the dead for ever lies  
Here in this quiet, lonely land,  
Where dark red trees of winter stand.

## AVE

Peace be with you, familiar trees  
That guard the hilly land and river ways;  
And you, my oak, guard still the memories of nights  
and days  
Sun swept, rain dark, and always beautiful.  
You understand,  
Great oak upon the hill,  
And you forest trees that pull the wind down the  
valley's length  
With your tempestuous strength!  
Keep tryst with me, my friends, my friend,  
At the journey's end.

From exile unto exile wandering,  
I hear across the sea the trees that sing  
The leafy chorus of eternal spring.  
On wild black horses down the hurrying skies  
The riders from the hills go by in storms,  
And cry aloud: "The Sleeper shall awake!  
The moon is waning and the Sun shall rise!"  
Then running forth, I watch slow flame that forms  
A trembling arc of colour on the lake.  
Bathed in that white, ecstatic dawn, I do not mark  
Time's footsteps on the bridge whose stones are  
day and dark;  
How earthly seasons insignificant go past  
Like autumn shadows trooping down the blast.

Familiar trees, green be your boughs!  
The exile comes again to count your leaves.  
My tree, upon your hill I build my house beneath  
    whose eaves  
Shall nest the homing love who never dies.  
Through sun and rain,  
Great oak, keep vigil still against the hostile skies;  
You also, sentinels of the road  
That leads to my abode!  
Peace be with us, my friends, my friend,  
At the journey's end.





BOOK II

CARMUS: A SYMPHONIC POEM







## CANTO I

The tall salt grass stood shoulder-high  
In the marsh where slow tides came and went;  
Only the sea, the marsh, and the sky,  
And the April wind with languid hands;  
Only these and a boy who bent  
A path through the grass with a hesitant tread,  
Now balancing high on a tufted root,  
Now sinking into the soggy sands,  
Till the tops of the reeds were over his head,  
And the water bubbled underfoot.  
Eyes level with the grass had guessed  
A swimmer on a pale green sea,  
His head mounting over a crest  
Then dipping under fearlessly,  
For his hair was tangled and wet as though  
He had been fighting the undertow,  
And the reeds moved with a billowy motion  
Like the landward swell of the summer ocean.

*The boy  
Carmus  
stands alone  
in the mortal  
Fens.*

Each time he rose from the rank morass  
 He looked out over the rippling grass,  
 Far out to sea with an eager gaze,  
 Hoping some full-sailed ship would pass;  
 For every chance ship, unaware,  
 Unloaded a cargo of riches there,—  
 Dreams to enact heroic plays  
 On the stage of empty nights and days,  
 And people those unfrequented ways.  
 Few passed by the menacing coast;  
 The province of Fens was shunned by most.  
 Those dunes and quicksands, so men said,  
 Were haunted by the living-dead.  
 Yet the marsh had children, held by a strange  
 Love for the outlands still unsung;  
 They lived like reeds, nor longed for change,  
 And the tides crept secretly among  
 The roots that fed their being, while  
 The world retreated mile by mile.

*He watches  
 for an ad-  
 venturous  
 ship bearing  
 dreams of  
 wider lands,*

*but the coast  
 is shunned by  
 mariners of  
 the open sea,  
 who dread the  
 tidal shoals.*

The world was farther than ever to-day;  
This was the sunrise of the year,  
The earth's soft answer that turns away  
The wrath of men who curse their sphere,  
Her one communicable joy,  
When love is frenzied, and enemies  
Meeting by chance in the sunlight, seize  
Each other's hands, and know not why.  
But the loneliest time of year to the boy  
So small between flat marsh and sky,  
With only the sea and the whispering sedge  
For friends, till his father came at night,  
And told him tales by the sooty light  
In their fisher's shack at the water's edge.  
The spring was a millrace, churning his heart;  
He turned, as a friend, to the reeds of the  
marsh;

*He is filled  
with loneli-  
ness, for the  
spring urges  
him toward  
the eternal  
sea and he  
cannot escape  
beyond the  
ebb and flood  
of time.*

He felt leaves swell on his fingertips,  
And the boisterous sap quicken and start;  
He too would struggle out of the harsh  
Husk of the autumn, and open his lips

To the sun and wind.

Music dinned

On his ears, but still the tide was creeping

Slow through the rotten sands, and seeping

Among the roots of anchored reeds.

Year after year the tides came through,

And every spring the green blades started,

And every autumn they scattered their seeds,

While the travelling ocean came and de-  
parted.

Ah God! there was nothing here that was  
new!

No ship came, and the afternoon

Burned down to a red line over the wold;

A dull red glow in the western sky,

A dull red glow in the long lagoon.

*In the  
twilight he  
beholds ghosts  
of drowned  
men*

To the east the sea turned iron cold,

And the hands of drowned men glimmered by.

Carmus faced to the west, and saw

A single flame in the open maw;

A slender light like a candleflame

Hovered against the scarlet crescent,  
Then floated free from the dim sunset.  
Over the distant marsh it came,  
Skimming the grass in a phosphorescent  
Haze to the place where Carmus stood.

*and a small  
flame ap-  
proaching  
him from the  
west.*

He watched it, only half-afraid;  
In the twilight sedges he had met  
Shapes that were neither light nor shade,  
The people of the solitude.

*He thinks it  
to be a phan-  
tom of the  
marshes,*

He watched it flit through the atmosphere,  
And slowly grow as it floated near,  
Until it sank from the top of the grass  
Into the path that he had made,  
Paused, and turned to him, like a veiled  
Woman, wavering and afraid.

He shrank away to let her pass,  
Not daring to touch her in the gloam,  
His heart hammered; his breath failed;  
He wished he were safe at home.



*but when it is  
revealed close  
at hand, he is  
aware of a  
great beauty,  
the face of his  
immortal  
comrade,*

Then as the clouds break for the sun,  
In a triangle of dazzling light,  
The veil broke, and before his sight  
Carmus saw a shining face  
Whiter than any he had spun  
On the delicate fabrics of the night.  
Fear fell, and in its place  
Wonder flooded his noisy blood;  
Under that sudden sun, the bud  
Of boyhood trembled to feel uncloze  
The petals of the impatient rose.  
A glance shy as a lightning gleam,  
Hair in a blown cloud filled with stars,  
Eyes so deep that to look at them  
Was to feel his own grow big with tears.

There was a music rising with soft insistence  
Out of the ground, out of the caves of the sea;  
There was a light laughing across ineffable  
distance,  
She was the radiance, and the music, She.

The stones of all the autumns the world has  
known  
Were piled together into a mouldy prison,  
And all the springs in the world had burst  
the walls, and risen  
In gardens of glad fruition out of the stone.  
There was a face in the twilight under the  
waning  
Sky, the face the dying pilgrim knows,  
Herself the leaves and roots, herself the music  
and colour, raining  
Seeds of unfinished beauty from the perpetual  
rose.  
There she stood amid them in benediction,  
Her white arms raised to the stars about her  
face,  
Life triumphant, dewy with resurrection,  
The crystal hung in the gulf of space.  
Unearthly joy that knew no law  
Of fleshly senses, but filled them all.  
He could not tell whether he saw  
Or heard or felt the miracle.

Was she a light? was she a song?  
He looked on fire, heard voices call;  
Fiercely he struggled out of the strong  
Grip of sense; his body fell  
In the path; his soul shook off the clinging  
Flesh and leaped in the starlight, singing.

*and leaving  
the flesh, he  
partakes of  
an eternal  
delight,*

Through layers of night to the verge of space  
The soul pierces in shafts of fire,  
Through whirling planets that interlace  
In the pattern of absolute desire.  
Who holds the lamp that guides the flier  
Up the white steps to the open door,  
Over the hush where suns expire,  
To the lofty house he has known before?

The bird upsprings from his resting place,  
From the nest fashioned of reeds and mire,  
And points to the upper sky full pace,  
A phoenix out of his ashen pyre.

His wings start ripples of sound from the lyre  
Of starlight,—to break on what far shore?  
Then on through arches dimmer and higher  
To the lofty house he has known before.

Whose is this half-remembered face?  
This voice that calls him up through the dire  
Void where hardly a star dares trace  
The outer rim of its widest gyre?  
And draws him up on a silver wire  
Of song through the multitudinous roar,  
A single theme through the dissonant choir,  
To the lofty house he has known before?

You are my half-self made entire;  
In you I have found my life once more,  
For the mortal days of a god aspire  
To the lofty house he has known before.

*though  
beneath him  
the material  
world is riven  
with storm.*

Clouds pour over the face of the moon;  
Writhing dragons with wings of thunder;  
Wan auroral lights festoon  
The blackened sky as the stars go under;  
Whirlwinds leap on the sea with spiral claws,  
Gash the wildly tossing arms that shield her  
face,  
Seize the ships, and splinter timbers into  
straws,  
Lift the waves in whirling maelstroms out of  
space;  
Land and ocean wrestle as they wrestled when  
the world was younger;  
Chaos screams in exultation through the dark;  
Storm wolves rage across the sand with eyes  
of terrible hunger,  
Drowning with roars the frightened hound's  
bark.  
Rain rolls in a solid wheel and crushes the  
rest of the battle,  
Flogs the ground with rotary shafts of steel,  
Drums against the cliffs with a hollow rattle,

Until there is nothing heard but the sound  
of her gnashing wheel.

Sullenly moaning, the waves of the sea are  
beaten under;

The wind is trampled like a petal into the mud;  
And then the rain itself rolls off in a cloak  
of thunder;

The wounded world drips with a rhythmic  
thud.

Ocean calls to soil, Are you hurt to death, my  
brother?

The broken sedges flap in rasping pain;  
Slowly the land and water divide from one  
another,

Slowly the wind shakes from the ground  
again.

Then all the mist glows, a luminous pearl  
Of hinted colour sifted into grey;  
Through fold on fold of fog uncurl  
The twisting fronds and tendrils of the day . . .



*His father  
finds him  
asleep in the  
marshes, and  
awakes him,*

Carmus! Carmus! Carmus! over the sedge  
A bearded voice repeats it like a charm.  
A tall old man fights splashing out of the west.  
He comes to the end of the path; there at the  
edge  
Of the beaten grass, his head on his folded  
arm,  
Lies Carmus, sleeping like a young heron in  
its nest.

“What are you doing here in the marsh all  
night?

*bidding him  
reenter the  
material  
world.*

The tide has turned. The nets are down al-  
ready.”

Nevertheless, the voice is not quite steady,  
The old man strangely smiles in the foggy  
light.

Father and son walk homeward, hand in hand;  
Silence is on their lips, and silence on the land;  
In the cadaverous haze they seem to be  
Gigantic symbols of the invisible sea,  
Looming across grey meadows of eternity . . .



Autumns and springs ran through their  
calendars,

And every sunset Carmus watched alone

The scarlet chord sink to a semitone,

And so break into pizzicati stars.

Sometimes across the crescent afterglow

A slender light floated, and even came

Over the moveless reeds to where he stood.

The veil would tremble with his trembling  
breath,

Part like a cloud, evaporate like snow,

Slip out between two thoughts, and leave  
him weeping.

Mile over mile of marsh the same,

The sea moaning its widowhood,

A chill hand stretched from the sleeve of  
death,

And Carmus groped back home as though he  
were sleeping.

*The desire  
for reunion  
with his im-  
mortal com-  
rade grows  
ever stronger,*

*He half  
forgets the  
ecstasy, but  
he cannot  
rest, for as  
time passes*

What was I doing in the marsh that night?  
Memory smoulders to its lowest ember  
Still hissing softly in the half-burned log.  
Nine years ago! and yet I never quite  
Forget, although I never quite remember.  
Days drag, far better had I never known,  
For time is haunted, now I am alone.  
In this flat wilderness of sea and fog,  
Where nothing ends, and nothing is begun,  
Something eludes me like a hinted song.  
I am as one who gazed the sun too long;  
The world goes black before my dazzled mind,  
Yet have I gained no knowledge of the sun,  
Save that it makes men blind.

The fury of the sunset scorched his veins,  
Dawn and midday found him on the sea,  
Urging his boat with nervous oars.  
But through spring twilight and thick autumn  
rains

It was a phantom at the oars, not he.

For he was waiting on disconsolate shores  
Where the grass stood shoulder-high,  
Till the sun's last ray was spent.  
He watched for a token in the sky.  
The slow tides came and went.

Life, who opened her doors, has closed them  
to her lover.

*filling him  
with a divine  
discontent.*

The key of death was mine; I have lost it in  
the sea.

I, who have sat at the banquet, am turned  
away still hungry;

I, who was once a man, am half divinity.

I was so near divine, so dangerously human,  
That I was welcomed into the house beyond  
the stars.

Now earth has turned against me; I am not of  
her children;

The sea cries out, What monster is this that  
plies the oars?

I am the reed uprooted, who drifted to far  
countries,

Who spread her leaves like a seagull's wings  
and thought to fly;

Dark currents have returned her to the  
familiar marshes,

But now she has no roots; she can not live  
or die.

Life, I have met you wandering at sunset in  
the marshes.

I was a boy, I feared you, you quieted my  
fears;

You lifted me to wisdom; you gave me all your  
secrets,

Then chained me again in flesh, and locked  
me in with years.

## INTERLUDE: OCEAN

Flung flat against the cliff and beaten back,  
Reared high white heads, procession vertical,  
Dashed on the rocks and washed away in  
    black,  
Swirled into whirling foam, rise up and fall.

Hunger and passionate despair and pain,  
Loneliness, memory, confused dismay,  
Flung up and washed away in waves again,  
Swirled on the cliffs of doom, burst into spray.

Youth and delight and full-sailed hopes that  
    tack  
Toward the green shore where Love has built  
    his home,  
Dash on the crags and shiver into black,  
Crash to the rocks and crumble into foam.

Beat fiercely, breath, against the jagged wall,  
Heart-pulse eternal, wear away the cliff,  
And you, young oarsman, as they rise and  
    fall,  
Steer straight to sea in your adventurous skiff.







## CANTO II

It is spring in Fens, spring on the sea,  
Spring in the fabulous cities to the west,  
Spring in the royal gardens of Venily.  
The day and night with mute artillery  
Fling great havoc of colour through the sky;  
The dull green marshes sigh  
As the tide seeps through their sodden roots;  
Out of her nest, with an appalling cry,  
A heron shoots across the low red sun, and  
    passes black  
Through the clouds, and vanishes in fire.  
Carmus turns his back,  
To find in the dark blue distance, something  
    nearer  
The image of his desire.  
(Night, be thou the mirror  
To show the face I have not looked upon  
These many years.  
Night, night, hasten against the sun  
With silver spears.)

*Spring  
follows spring  
and the youth  
Carmus still  
searches for  
his immortal  
comrade, and  
watches the  
sunset agony  
of death over  
the Fens.*



The wind urges the flaming clouds across  
To the east. They are drifting fire-ships that  
toss

Scarlet brands to harry the harbours of night.  
They sail to the dim horizon, they scatter fire;  
The skies are enkindled, the universe entire  
Flares in a blast of supernatural light.

He shrinks from the glory he knows too well;  
He covers his face with his hands, but his  
soul is kindled;

Within him there burn sunsets as terrible,  
Smiting the man to frenzy and fugitive  
passion

That would leave the gods themselves trem-  
bling and ashen.

When he opens his eyes the glare has dwindled.  
In the west the embers are growing duller.  
The glass-green east is ready for stars and  
moon.

The sea has resumed its grey nocturnal colour,  
The marsh its grey nocturnal tune.

“I will go to the mystic city  
Istis, and wait no longer on this shore.  
Life may be pitiless, but the gods have pity;  
I will pray the gods nor seek her any more.”  
Then he searches the sky with gaze grown  
dim,

*He beholds a  
light in the  
east, and  
thinks it to be  
his dawn, but  
it is only the  
moonrise of  
mortal desire.*

Hoping to tempt them into tempting him,  
And a light glows in the east, but it is only  
The swollen moon, rising august and lonely.

*Tides pass through the tall grass.*

*Seasons flow in tireless stream.*

*Suns sail from east to west.*

*The wanderer merges in his quest,*

*And the dreamer in his dream.*

*He sets out  
toward the  
mystic city of  
Istis, hoping  
to find his  
beloved by the  
river of con-  
templation,  
but Istis, too,  
is subject to  
the moon.*

Forests and mountains after horizoned seas,  
Birdsong and waterfall in the glimmering  
glade;

Carmus lifts up his heart to the trees,  
Calls them by name, kneels in their holy shade.  
They are strong, godlike people, proud and  
wise,

Masters of the wind, dictators of the skies.  
One oak can dwarf the stature of a hill,  
One pine can talk far louder than the sea;  
Their feet are firm in immortality,  
Their hands can push the storm, or hold it still.  
Carmus hears their voices, he sees their eyes,  
He knows they look upon him friendlywise.

Five days and nights he journeys, then he  
comes

To the river Layis where Istis rises fair  
In the moonlight, shimmering tall across the  
river.

He hears the priests beating the sacred drums  
Behind those columns so unreal they sway  
and quiver

As the dull rhythm marches through the air.  
He hears low voices chanting in monotone.  
He too will chant in the Temple of the Moon  
Till a face floats up through mysteries of  
smoke and prayer.

By the river-bank a boat is moored among the  
ferns.

Carmus jumps in and pushes off from the  
rustling shores.

He rows out quickly into the liquid light, and  
churns

The surface dimpling with gems behind his  
fiery oars.

The flocks of the moon graze on the pebbly  
shoals of the river,

The wind flits through the overhanging sycamores.

Above him loom tremendous columns, tier  
on tier,

Shafts of high quietude that guard the mystic  
town,

So lofty they taper to a point and disappear,  
Seeming to lift the earth, and bring the  
zenith down.

So soaring, so austere, the mountain slinks  
beneath them,

And the pilgrim feels abashed beneath that  
topless crown.

Then file from the shadows, chanting, a line  
of spectral priests  
Approaching in pale parade, dwarfed by the  
awful roof;  
They are coming out to hail the Moon and  
sing her feasts.  
Carmus goes forward toward them, but  
with a soft reproof  
They turn him back; he must wait to see the  
ineffable goddess.  
They are ancient and serene, they hold them-  
selves aloof.

Ahmes, the high-priest, chides him. "The in-  
most mystery  
Is not for your eyes yet, nor for my lips to tell.  
Go down the passage yonder, until you reach  
a tree  
With torches on its boughs. Beneath it is a  
well  
Fed by the springs of Layis, deeper than man  
can measure,  
Sit there and gaze into its waters, till the shell

“Of flesh is burned away by the Light of  
Lights, that makes  
Men worthy of the goddess. Silence till you  
know.”

Carmus walks down the hall where every  
footstep wakes

Clamouring echoes through the columns row  
on row.

Alone and frightened, down long aisles of  
conspiring echoes,

Till he beholds the tree whose branches shiver  
and glow.

Hour by hour passes, and there is no time.  
His thoughts drown in the soundless well.  
His pulses freeze.

Sight comes and goes. He hears the dreary  
chime

Of bellbuoys charting the channels of infinite  
silences.

*And he meets  
only the  
images of his  
own fear.*

They ring and die away, while stealthily  
comes nearer

A droning hum like summer cloverfields of  
bees.



The sound resolves in colour. On the well's  
smooth surface  
Small bubbling sparks come up, and burst in  
whirling rays.  
Then suddenly a blue hand brushes away the  
nervous  
Flashes, and spreads a disc of palely luminous  
haze,  
Whereon a face appears, the face of the Be-  
loved,  
And looks up from the depths with an eternal  
gaze.

Carmus cries out triumphantly, and leans  
far down.

The water breaks in violent prisms with the  
tone.

The face is petrified into a timeless frown  
Cut with abysmal lines across a brow of stone.  
Then one by one the torches on the tree expire.  
Murmurs rush through the dark where Car-  
mus trembles alone.



“O Ahmes, the seed thou gavest has bloomed,  
and it is nought.  
I know thou art full of age and wisdom; I  
bow my head.  
But the phantoms that assailed me from the  
well of thought  
Came not from the holy living, but from the  
unholy dead;  
I have wrought as thou badest, Ahmes; I  
fear thy wisdom failed thee;  
Thou didst promise light would dawn. Dark  
has come instead.”

And Ahmes answered him in a voice as soft  
as flame,  
“I saw all this in a dream. The goddess bids  
thee depart.  
Thinkst thou that She, the peerless One, can  
be to blame?  
Go then to the city of Nalda, and learn their  
curious art;  
Their priests can raise the dead; their god is  
full of power;  
Each day they eat his flesh, and drink the  
blood of his heart.”

*Tides pass through the tall grass.  
Seasons flow in tireless stream.  
Suns sail from east to west.  
The wanderer merges in his quest,  
And the dreamer in his dream.*

Carmus took ship for Nalda; he sang for the  
rapture  
That flashed from the crested waves in the  
crystal morning.

But when he saw the sunset, an echoed warn-  
ing

*He travels on  
to the Chris-  
tian City of  
Nalda,*

Rang in his brain, and he covered his face  
with his hand.

Not yet, not yet, the time to recapture  
The key that opens the door of existence;  
He watched till the dawn, and there in the  
distance

Sparkled the slender peaks of the new god's  
land.

But no, they were not the peaks of huge and  
delicate mountains;

He stood beneath them, he climbed with  
marvelling eyes.

They were gigantic fountains

Whose waters had pushed higher and higher  
into the skies

And were frozen to stone before they began to  
fall.

The wind blew; he huddled against the wall;  
Surely those fragile points would snap and  
tumble

To the frost mosaic of the roof below!

A door swung in the cliff between the spires;

He saw blue twilight splashed with jewelled  
fires,

And far in the distance, six stars in a row.

He heard an earthquake music rumble,

And the voice of choirs.

*and in his  
ignorance  
believes the  
cathedral to  
be cut from  
the living  
Mountain.*

There it was vast as the tall-vaulted night;  
When the door shut again, the day seemed  
small.

Was that the new god's hall?  
Was it there men tasted of divine delight,  
And ate their god, and drank his blood, to be  
Partakers of his own divinity?  
Bells poured quicksilver notes across the air.  
"If God be there, then Life is also there."

The hush is almost solid, pressed by centuries.  
It is something like the forest when the sun  
is low,

When shining red and gold flare between the  
trees

Whose trunks stand darkly vertical against  
the glow.

Can those be men whose robes are woven out  
of fire?

They must be gods, it is from them the  
glories flow.

The thunder of the god rolls forth; the crowds  
awaken;  
A hundred priests in gold and red and white  
are singing;  
The six stars on the holy rock are blurred and  
shaken  
By clouds of smoke that curl from globes the  
priests are swinging.  
And then three words wail out. Is it the name  
of God  
That humbles every head, and sets the bells  
ringing?

It is God's Blood! The high-priest drinks  
from a jewelled cup.

It is God's Flesh exalted! the white against  
the red.

The mountains swim with sound. Man shall  
be lifted up,

And by that blood be healed, and by that  
body fed.

Carmus runs forward, crying, "I too would  
taste of Life!"

He stops. Two eyes look down on him, and  
they are Dead.

*He is in-  
spired by fair  
ceremonies to  
seek his  
living  
comrade,*

What terrible god has done this ruthless thing,  
And nailed this youth with nails through  
feet and hands

Still stained with the blood and sweat of  
suffering?

What God? . . . then suddenly Carmus  
understands.

That is the god himself who hangs there slain;  
His priests have betrayed him. God is killed  
by his priests.

They feed on his life in their endless feasts,

*and finds a  
god whom the  
priests have  
crucified,*

They dye their robes in the blood of his pain,

They rob him of godhead, they refresh

Their weary souls with his blood and flesh.

Carmus turns, and on nightmare feet

Runs from the temple into the glaring street.



And someone said, "Even in this woeful place,  
I have not seen such woe as yours, young  
man."

*and runs into  
the street  
where the  
witch-woman  
of Vallamar-  
is is waiting  
for him.*

He looked up, and beheld a woman's face  
Laughing into his sorrow, and a fan  
Held to the chin with somewhat of disdain.  
He shuddered. "Do you know that they have  
slain

Their god, and live upon his flesh and blood?"  
She frowned, as if she had not understood,  
Then smiled again: "No, fool, he is not dead.  
They think they have him on that tree, instead  
He slipped away from them long since, and  
they

Devour themselves. It is themselves they  
slay. . . .

*She tells him  
of the living  
God who has  
escaped the  
wiles of the  
priests,*

“What are you moaning here in Nalda for?  
Young men should be in Vallamaris; there  
Is the glint of life. This place is for the old,—  
I come from Vallamaris, and I know!”

“There is life in Vallamaris?” “Nowhere  
more!

Life, and life abundant in the air;  
Beauty and love for the asking, towers of  
gold,

*and bids him  
disport him-  
self in her city,  
hoping thereby  
to go back  
herself,*

And queens and courtiers strolling to and fro.”

“But I am looking for . . . I come from  
Fens,—

Perhaps my thoughts are not as other men’s.”

“O yes! I know your province. I have been  
Once through those dolorous marshes. You  
have seen

Something that haunts you? You have lost  
some meaning

In life that you must find again, or perish?  
I know, but are you sure this dream you  
cherish,

Recovered, would be even worth the gleanings?

Go then to Vallamaris, you will find  
Your secret, or else chase it from your mind.  
And after that, who knows? you may press  
on

To Venily where I have never gone.  
In Nalda! O young fool, give me your  
chance!

Give me the youth you waste! Let me go  
back!

Still, I have had my share of life's romance;  
Let the moon turn to blood, and the sun go  
black!"

*since those  
who have  
worn out  
their time in  
Vallamaris  
can return  
only through  
the magic of  
the chaste.*

*Tides pass through the tall grass.*

*Seasons flow in tireless stream.*

*Suns sail from east to west.*

*The wanderer merges in his quest,*

*And the dreamer in his dream.*

*In Vallamaris he beholds the spectacle of earthly delights, which he does not understand,*

Carmus in Vallamaris looks up at the stars;  
They do not seem important, they are far  
away.

While garish torches flicker through the red  
bazaars,

And the crowd goes by in a crested wave  
flashing with spray.

There are colonnades of turquoise, towers  
sheathed with jewels,

And palaces like anchored ships over the bay.

He is hailed by ladies with green falcons on  
their wrists,

*although a great drunkenness of spirit bids him discard his identity and merge into the crowd, where everyone is but a looking-glass, reflecting his neighbour;*

And when they dance their silks hiss like the  
autumn grass.

Sometimes they stop and bid him to their  
garden trysts;

He dares not try to dance with queens, and he  
lets them pass.

And one or two gaze long at him, and preen  
themselves

Before his eyes as though he were a looking-  
glass.

He feels ashamed, not knowing why; he seems  
remote

From all the glitter, and awkward as a foolish  
lad.

He would rather be on the water yonder in  
his boat;

How came he here among this folk so bravely  
clad?

Behind the tawdry town the mountains lean  
and whisper,

Three waiting dreams beyond the fleeting  
myriad.

They pass in darkness as the laughing es-  
planades

String beads of gold along the purple atmos-  
phere;

For all the city lies beneath the feet of gods,  
They sleep, and she, the ever-wakeful, has  
no fear.

They hear her voice as one unmeaning or-  
chestra,

But near her throbbing heart, each instrument  
is clear.

Plunge into pulsing dances, trumpet and horn  
and drum,  
Make sentimental drinkers weep, soft violin.  
The doors of taverns jar and swing, the  
rhythms come  
Of shuffling feet outside, and dancing feet  
within.  
Am I that Carmus heard nearby, a separate  
spirit,  
Or am I but a small vibration of the din?

He sees the towers riddled with windows  
fiercely gleaming  
Until the walls are only slender webs of black;  
And one by one, single faces break from the  
streaming  
Crowd, take on their lonely lives, and give  
him back  
Glance for his glance, until he names them  
from a distance,  
As bold Chaldeans charted the tangled zodiac.



Streets, streets, streets, unfolding in festoons,  
Filled with flames, and phantoms, angels,  
    beasts,  
Unchanging in eternal change under the  
    moons,  
Moonrise, moonset for ever, and for ever  
    feasts  
Of anguish and desire, amazement and for-  
    getting,  
Death and the search for dawn through all  
    the warring easts.

And yet there is something rising between us,  
    I do not know  
If it hatred be of a stranger such as I,  
Or if perhaps I can not mingle in the flow  
Of crowds coming and going under the mortal  
    sky.  
Something there is that fills my nerves with  
    the music of April,  
They cannot hear; their deafness means  
    hostility . . .

*until the  
woman of  
Vallamaris,  
disguised  
with the  
reflection of  
his own  
purity, be-  
witches him,*

Someone is coming down the noisy street  
In a glimmer of silence louder than any sound;  
There is a music rising out of the ground.  
Someone is coming down the noisy street  
Swathed in a tremulous veil of mystery;  
There is a music out of the caves of the sea.  
Someone is floating down the street  
Immaculate through the brawling throng;  
His heart leaps with a starlight song;  
She glides by on ghostly feet,  
Her veil brushes him like a cloud,  
Speechless, he follows through the crowd,  
Beyond the torches, down a muddy lane,  
Between tall trees singing remembered rain,  
And through a gate opening to a court  
Sequestered from the world, a garden port  
From the labour of the streets' impatient tide.  
Then up a mossy stairway to a door  
Showing a shadowed room. They step inside.  
The blood goes through his eardrums with a  
    roar;  
His hands are cold as stone, he can not think.

He stands in the marshes, on the brink  
Of supreme flight into the sunset-dawn.  
One fear alone still shakes him like a reed:  
Will she vanish, now in his hour of need?  
A white hand rises pale as the moon from a  
blur

Of mist. Slowly, slowly, the veil is drawn  
From the face. He can not stir.  
His senses fail struggling to look at her.  
He claws at his eyes to clear their throbbing  
sight,

And sees a withered face,  
One half scarred red, the other ashen white,  
Pulled from the glaring eyes in a starved  
grimace.

The yellow teeth open, and wheezing laughter  
Spurts from the mouth, and words half  
choked with mirth.

He looks and hears and can not turn away.  
“You came to Vallamaris; I came after,  
And we shall go together through the earth . .

What! and have you forgotten that woeful  
day .

Outside the grey cathedral? I was there.

You ran weeping and shouting across the  
square.

Ah, you remember now. I bade you go

To Vallamaris? Well, I too came back.

You did not know me then, but now you  
know;—

Your woman of the marshes,—that is I!”

And then she laughs as if her throat would  
crack,

And spreads her arms into a wild embrace.

Carmus cries out in fear, “That is a lie!

I have seen your face, and I have seen her  
face.”

Swift as the wind he plunges out of the room,

Down the slippery stairs, and under the stars.

He hears her following through the gloom,

Step for his step, neither slower nor faster.

He flings through the court and crashes into  
the gate;

It is closed, bolted with seven iron bars.  
He bludgeons himself against it, mad with  
    disaster;  
Step by step she approaches, steady as fate.  
A hand, bitterly cold, is on his throat,  
A breath is beating into his tingling ear,  
His heart is stabbed with an icy spear,  
His body begins to float.  
“Witch! Monster! let me go!”  
Her laughter explodes against his brain,  
They crash together, frenzied with blood and  
    pain,  
Lashing each other to and fro.

The earth slips softly away; he is borne on  
    the flow  
Of a tide of music whirling them round and  
    round.

*and in a  
wonderful  
manner,  
transforms  
him into a  
part of the  
carnival,*

His head swirls with the swirling sound.  
Into the garden filters the glow  
Of the rising moon, and torches flare.

Under the trees in the twinkling air  
Courtiers and queens are dancing sprightly;  
Bracelets jingle, silks lightly  
Hiss like the wind in the autumn grass.  
Carmus is dancing; a girl is dreaming  
Into his eyes; he smiles in hers,  
And sees himself in a looking-glass,—  
A splendid sight! he is clad in gleaming  
Silk like the bravest of courtiers.

The wanderer sets his haven afar,  
And the dreamer vanishes into his dream;  
A cloud flies over the quested star,  
And clear through the dark our torches gleam.

While the tides pass through the tall grass,

*while a cynic  
music per-  
verts the  
theme of his  
wanderings  
into a dance.*

This night, this moment, silver-drenched  
Call to the travellers that pass,  
Turn them aside, and their thirst is quenched.



Drink deep, life's fathomable wells  
Are almost dry, the hour is late.  
The cock crows, and the first bells  
Stir the guard of the sun's gate.

Suns go sailing from east to west,  
The seasons flow in tireless stream,  
But thou art the earth's dying guest;  
She is thy truth, the rest, thy dream.

Take her, and live, nor turn away  
For a hand of mist, her hand of clay.  
Night wanes, the sun has crossed  
The loom where the dawn is spun in frost. . .

*But the  
charm breaks  
when the  
winter comes,  
and once  
more Carmus  
is alone.*

Winter comes with sudden snow.

In Vallamaris hungry foxes bark.

The laughter and the dance are dreams of  
long ago

Dreamed by the marble dead who slumber in  
the dark.

Carmus stands alone in the ruined city, and  
shivers

As the wind drifts the snow in the fountains of  
the park.

He looks where the trees are interlaced on the  
wintry west.

He cries: "Come now from the desolate  
mountains heaped with snow!

The wandering heron returns to the marshes  
and knows her nest.

The wandering man would sleep, but still you  
bid him go

Into the new horizons that fade as he ap-  
proaches.

We move no more than the reeds that bend  
to the ocean's flow.

“Through labyrinths of many gods and many  
faiths

I have sought, but your doors are closed,  
that once were open wide.

I have cast my youth at your feet, suffered  
a hundred deaths,

But you make me less than a man, who once  
was deified.

What more do you want of me, O Life, what  
more can I give you?

The snow is your only answer; for this have  
we lived and died.”

*Tides pass through the tall grass.*

*Seasons flow in tireless stream.*

*Suns sail from east to west.*

*The wanderer merges in his quest,*

*And the dreamer in his dream.*

INTERLUDE: THE SONG OF FREMA,  
THE EARTH-SPIRIT.

In the snow I found him,  
When death was waiting to harvest him in  
his sleep.

The whirling winds were whetting their  
scythes round him,  
The sheaves were piling deep.

With love I crowned him.  
The winter slid from our roof, spring opened  
our door.  
But a mightier love than mine had caught  
and bound him,—  
A love he had known before.

I would not claim him.  
He was claimed by a dream I never had  
understood.  
And at last I played him false, pretending to  
blame him,  
That he might go if he would.

I overcame him,  
And sent him forth unscathed in his own esteem.

He was a restless gull, I could not tame him,  
Nor clip the wings of his dream . . .

What more, O gods who fling  
Our joys to dust and mould?  
What more can I give to win me peace of  
heart? Behold,  
I make you a burnt offering!







### CANTO III

High doors of quiet open, and the King  
Of Venily waits in the empty hall;  
He knows what Carmus has to sing;  
He knows the source and end;  
All things that have been, all that will befall,  
Live in his consciousness, appear and blend.

*The man  
Carmus after  
long be-  
wildernment  
has reached  
the Venily of  
inspiration  
and fulfil-  
ment,*

“All men that move in your domain  
Must come at last to you, the moveless mind,  
Yours, O King, is the Naldan’s pain,  
The image that escapes the Istian’s thought;  
You see their vistas clear where they are blind,  
And toilless, still create what they have  
wrought.

“You know your song of Venily.  
Know you my song of Fens? that too is  
yours,  
You are the forest, every tree  
Gives you its voice to swell the mighty rhyme.  
Hear now the voice of the tree on the out-  
land moors,  
Singing to itself on the fringe of time. . .”

*where he tells  
of his journey  
to the divine  
intelligence:*

. . . From Vallamaris, the last of the  
happy host

*how when the  
wind swept  
away the  
revellers he  
resolved to  
push on  
toward  
Venily,*

Departed; I was alone in the haunted town.  
Dead houses stared at me, the single ghost  
Who walked black-footed through the snow.  
Marking the blank streets up and down,  
Where I had strolled not long ago  
Arm in arm with incarnate summer.  
Where were they, the harlot and mummer?  
Where were they, the masquer and dancer?  
Gusts of snow whirled strangely ahead,  
Phantoms dancing, wind for an answer;  
Wherever they were, for me they were dead.  
The mountain smiled in the stiff blue air,  
The glacier sang a thin refrain,—  
“We have seen this planet white and bare,  
We shall see it bare and white again.”  
Finally I said, soon will the winter  
Heap upon me, heavier than stone;  
Hooves of the storm stamp in the night;  
Man is crushed cruelly between  
Solid sky and solid earth,

Grinding the little life that defies them.  
Venily is far; fierce is the cold;  
Yet if I tarry, tombs are open,—  
Better the song, seeking its hearer  
Than a coward corpse caught in the frozen  
Crust till the thaw thins the winter.  
The fourth night fell, and found the wanderer  
Far bewildered, a wavering ship  
Rudderless, chartless, reeling in the thick  
Uneven snow that snarled beneath him.  
Shadows were blue, blown with the snow-  
drifts,

Pines stood dark desolately whining,  
Oaks roared, racked with the wind.  
Then as the twilight twisted the shadows,  
He heard the wails of witches and warlocks,  
He heard the night gnashing her teeth,  
Her flung hair heavy with hurtling blizzards.  
He saw eyes flashing, flames in the north;  
His feet stumbled, faint with nightmare;  
Swarms of bees burned him with ice;  
Faces of the dead danced in the flakes,

*and the  
blizzard  
caught him,  
and  
phantoms as-  
sailed him,*

Shrieking and laughing at the lorn traveller.  
Who was the man madly vanishing  
In the blare of the blast that blew the world  
out?

Was it a warrior waging battle  
Against the furious fiends of winter?  
Was it a wizard working wonders  
Cloaking himself in a cloud of tempest?  
No, it was a minstrel, a man of music,  
A man of dreams; dread was upon him.  
He longed to sleep, lured by the snow  
That sang a little lilt in the darkness;  
“Wanderer, rest warm in my arms;  
Homeless you wander; here is your home.”  
Bells rang faintly, beautiful with distance. . . .

*until he  
should have  
perished*

I woke to the sound of flames and someone  
singing.

Slowly I swam up through the dark,  
And in the light, I shut my eyes, still clinging  
To the hope that I should wake in another  
sphere.

I had closed the book of life without a mark  
On pages where the meaning was so clear.

The sun beat scarlet on my lids; I stirred.  
Footsteps ran across the room,  
And then I heard  
A question: "Are you still asleep?"  
Why should I answer from the tomb  
To face again the fields that none may reap?

*but for the  
earth-maiden  
Frema, who  
delivered  
him from  
death,*

I opened my eyes. Hail the sun!  
Hail the dawn! yea, it was She,  
Poised on a bar of light. Eternal One  
At last the years crumble away.  
It was you that set me free  
And opened the garden gates of day.

*and in whom,  
again, he  
thought to  
find his be-  
loved.*

Face that I have met  
In time's first twilight on primeval shores,—  
You have forgotten, Frema? I too shall forget,  
Now the new year wakes, and the old may  
fly.

Hear the denial the wind roars,  
As the fire dissparkles piercing radii.

You are the answer to all questionings,  
The harvest of the laboured season;  
Safe in your house the soul can fold its wings,  
And the heart slow to a calmer pace.  
You are the miracle that mocks at reason,  
The star that rises over time and space.

You smile to hear me, you who are so wise  
Feign that you do not understand;  
And while you speak, God reaches from your  
eyes,  
Unlocks the door and bids the spring awake.  
All things you touch with your unconscious  
hand  
Take on divinity for Beauty's sake.



(Winter passes, do I hear  
The sun's intrepid cannoneer  
Bombarding every loaded branch  
Into a noisy avalanche?  
Swamps are crimson, maple blood  
Reddens through each folded bud,—  
Hark, Frema! silver-clear,  
The call of the first pioneer!)

The rotten snow showed here and there a  
patch

Of muddy soil with starting green.

A hundred times each day we paused to catch

Some note that promised the warm sun.

But joys in nature slowly came between

The snowbound joy that we had known as one.

I found myself at dusk persuading

My spirit from the radiance it sought

In the wide sunset, for I saw it fading

Out of the face that I had loved so well.

What was the subtle change those months  
had wrought

To dim the image of the miracle?

*Again disillusioned, he  
was driven  
forth by his  
unrest at the  
coming of  
spring.*

It was as if that face had been a mirror  
In which the Eternal cast her pure reflection,  
And mortal eyes beholding, thought it clearer  
Than the fair flesh that love half-deified,  
Till mortal desires breathed in that direction,  
Misted the surface, and the image died.

Vaguely I was invaded by the stress  
That gave no respite to my spirit.  
Mute prisoners, we two could only guess  
The chains that held each other so alone.  
Her silence grew so hollow I could hear it  
Echo her thoughts like a grey wall of stone.

The soul died out of love little by little,  
And as the flesh grew more insistent, joys  
Grew thin, and patience brittle,  
And broke with a snap between our eyes.  
One night there flared the lightning that de-  
stroys,  
And after the fire, the sullen ashes of surmise.

Yet spring was on the heath blowing her horns,  
And the summons of her music moved  
Our hearts to push out buds among the thorns  
And bloom suspended between love and lust.  
Filled with earth-melody, our bodies loved;  
Our thoughts fled one another in disgust.

One morning early, the first bird astir  
Sang three clear notes from summer's core.  
I woke, went in, and looked at her;  
Her mouth was angry and drawn.  
Softly I opened the door  
And walked out through the glister of the  
dawn.

Venily should never hear my song;  
The music had all died.  
Yet hark to the triumph that uprose along  
The forest ways and the path by the canal!  
Music enough in the green ripe countryside,  
No need of my voice in that full chorale.

Once more I was drifting on without a goal,  
The first grey hairs already on my head,  
The winter snows unmelted in my soul.  
Why had I ever gone from Fens?  
I thought to see more clearly, and instead  
The farther I went, the thicker grew the lens.

Night came, and where the sunset faded out  
Lingered a bloody scar across the sky.

*In the  
twilight he  
saw what he  
thought to be  
the lamp of  
his immortal  
comrade,*

The chill of boyish doubt  
Ran through my veins with reminiscent dread.  
Should I go forward? Should I turn and fly?  
Darkly a whip-poor-will sang overhead;

The sound scattered my terror, and I felt  
The good familiar earth beneath my feet.  
No evil and fantastic monsters dwelt  
Horribly in that tangled green,—  
Rather it was a kingdom, all complete,  
That moved in beautiful routine.

I called to the bird, he whistled back again,  
Articulate as speech could never be.  
Up in the sky mounted the stain  
As though the sun had turned back from the  
west.

Smoke and glare confused the galaxy,  
And even shook the forest to gaunt unrest.

I climbed a hill; in the vale below me burned  
Campfires in a gleaming ring.  
Men rose from shadow, for a moment turned  
Flame-colour; armour flashed, hands flickered  
red.

Who was this army? No man but the King  
Could mass such living hosts,—were they  
the dead?

Then three long notes from a horn, three sob-  
bing notes.

The hush crumbled, hung for a moment dumb.  
A shout from a hundred thousand throats,  
And the mountain shivered with the billow-  
ing sound.

*and was led  
by the false  
light into the  
midst of  
battle,*

One pulse between them throbbed a drum,  
The heart of war began to thud and pound.

Who are you, watchers and warriors, moving  
to battle?

The birches shake to feel them march, the  
mountain sighs.

Drums beat, swords jangle, cannon jolt and  
rattle,

The ancient night lifts up her head, and  
breathes Alas!

Who are you, youthful warriors? against dis-  
torted skies

The silhouettes of horsemen and tangled  
ranks pass.

Then thunder like hooves of wild horses  
stampeding on infinite prairies,

Flashes all over the sky, exploding in spiral  
flowers;

Lights climb through the midnight, trailing  
delicate stems,

And hang in stars in the leaves of the tallest  
trees of Paradise.

A swaying serpent heavily sags over the hills,



His rumbling weight wearing away the soil  
to the rocks;

He is gorged with cringing victims, I hear  
them shouting and crying.

All the clouds of the universe clash in the  
caves of chaos

With a crash so fearful I can only feel, not  
hear it.

*a battle of  
ghosts re-  
hearsed end-  
lessly by the  
living dead.*

Each drop of that ruinous rain is heavy as  
molten lead,

And grinding into the ground bursts with a  
heat so horrible

That all the strength of the soil flares in a  
flaming harvest,

One murderous ripening, blighting the yield  
of a myriad years,

Springs, summers, autumns, run through in  
a single second,—

Henceforth there will always be winter in  
the heavily-harvested land.

A host of men go howling by, their faces are  
green

And drenched with dripping earth; their  
    mouths are agape with madness;  
They trample me, hurrying by, a tremendous  
    herd of nightmares,  
Drawing with bony hands, drunkenly bidding me join them;  
I falter and fall, they tramp me down with  
    their iron feet.  
Their ranks finally pass, they are being  
    fiercely pursued  
By a brawling flock of fluttering crows with  
    broken wings.  
Blood drips from their beaks; they drag at  
    the bodies of the slain,  
Some of them toppling dead themselves with  
    a stopped croaking.  
Straining to flee, I strive forward, an anchored  
    ship  
In the shouting wind of panic that pushes me  
    from my anchorage.  
My feet are fixed; I can not move from the  
    merciless mooring.

Then passed I into a sleep, and when I awoke  
The valley was breathless under the frightened  
sun

Floating its rays along the strata of smoke,  
Showing the country desolate, calm as snow,  
White bones on the blasted earth; the battle  
was done,—

Was it only yesterday, or years ago?

I will go back over the plain  
And find the house of my Love, I said.  
Lest I go down to death among the slain,  
Nameless among the nameless.  
I will go back; love shall rise from the dead.  
It was I who sullied the image, she was  
blameless.

*In the morn-  
ing he sought  
to return to  
the love of  
Frema,*

The forest where I had heard the whip-poor-  
will

But yesternight, was a split and twisted mass  
Of stumps and charcoal against the hill  
Whose soil was pitted and scarred like the  
face of the moon.

There was not a bush, a leaf, nor a blade of  
grass,

Pillars of silence held the dark roof of noon.

These writhen trees died with a scream of pain.  
Their skeleton arms attest their agonies.  
And there they will reach, those arms lifted  
in vain

For ever, praying for mercy that never was  
given.

Beneath them the bones of young men torn  
like the trees,

And skulls with accusing eyeholes glaring at  
heaven.

Resurrection seemed to pour  
From the first green I found after those miles  
Of trudging down the extinct crater of war.  
And here were saplings, wrinkled with the  
    heat

But still in leaf. Beautiful were the smiles  
Wind-rippled over the first field of wheat.

Just beyond the next turn in the road  
The low-eaved house is waiting for me.  
Love is a pioneer, her safe abode  
Confronts the wilderness of cynic death.  
My heart outran my feet, that bore me  
Swift as the wind on hilly Leoneth.

The chimney of the house was standing there,  
Gaunt sentry over a smoking hole.  
The fireplace gaped in the air;  
The fallen hearth had left a yellow scar.  
The bushes round the house were black as  
    coal,  
A half-burned board protruded like a spar.

*but he could  
never return  
for that was  
long ago, and  
scattered in  
ashes.*

Frema! Frema! Frema! so I cried  
All night, not knowing how time fell away.  
No answer but the slide  
Of ashes in the ruined heaps.  
And no one ever answered; to this day  
A mystery guards the region where she sleeps.

The labyrinth whose intertwining ways  
I followed thus so vainly, has its plan,  
And though I seem bewildered in the maze,  
There is a thread that guides me to the door.  
Sometimes I lose it; other times I scan  
The lofty portal I have known before.

And even now the great door swings ajar.  
The lintel widens in a line of light.  
Who stands there? Drop your veil, eternal  
Star.

Come forth, O cloud-enwrapt!  
A tidal wave of darkness overwhelms the  
height.  
We fumble in the depths. The thread is  
snapped.



## INTERLUDE

It is so calm, the sea itself, asleep,  
Lies like a lover-trodden path that bounds  
    The garden of the world.  
Sink thou, wrought soul, into a dream serene  
    and deep  
Wherein the earth's loud company of sounds  
    Faint slumber-curved  
Beyond the last horizon where the senses keep  
Their nervous vigil for the cares that rise  
To fill our ears, or hold our weary eyes.

Is there a dream so flooded by the spirit  
That we can dive into its still delight  
    Beyond earth's flare and crash,  
Without a voice or song insistent that we  
    hear it,  
Without a colour to persuade our sight,  
    Or dim seductive flash  
To stir some reminiscent joy, and so endear it  
To the fond hearts, that waking into pain  
Dispel this peace and bid us feel again?

If such there be, profound, ineffable,  
Let it be mine, for I have stood too long  
    Facing the restless ocean.  
The young moon leads the captive tide with-  
    out a swell;  
The shadowed clouds have hung since ves-  
    persong  
    Without a single motion.  
Let me escape; nor even such voices as a shell  
Holds in its throbbing emptiness, reply  
With hints of memoried mortality.

Then for a quiet moment, let me live  
That life in which the world's tremendous  
    psalm  
    Sinks to a fitful breath;  
Freed of all thought, know not that time is  
    fugitive.  
Rather that all eternity is calm,  
    Calmer than death.  
And neither hear nor see, remember nor  
    forgive,  
But deep within my teeming spirit feel  
The great rotation of the infinite wheel.









## CANTO IV

The mountain broods. . . .

It is silent beneath it, beyond it, and in those  
woods

There is silence.

*The old man  
Carmus, at  
the end of his  
journey, sits  
on the  
Mountain,*

It is afternoon. . . .

Late afternoon, late autumn, the world is  
strewn

In the valleys.

Look to the clear northwest.

The sun has touched the rim of the rounded  
sea.

The horizontal rays on Venily  
Silver her columns.

*and beholds  
the sunset  
over Venily.*

Serene on its airy crest,  
The Salnka, that high temple, calls the night,  
Spreading aspiring wings for a final flight  
Into the sunset.

Smoke from the altars arises blue  
Above the trees and huddled mass of stone.  
Persistent bells cleave keenly through  
The city's multitudinous tone.

From this exalted distance, all  
The royal town is harmonized in one;  
One body with a communal  
Response to the retreating sun;

One soul, yet sheltering  
All the contentious minds who will compete  
With song before the King.

Pale priests of Istis, stealthy as the dead,  
And Naldans, shouting hymns from street  
to street,  
And courtiers and jades  
From Vallamaris, autumn-harvested.  
Life in a myriad fleshly masquerades,  
So various, so strangely one,  
That seasons just begun  
Repeat the idiom of the dead.



Last year, a century hence, this afternoon,  
Waves on the same tide, following the moon.

Carmus watches night  
Flow sluggishly, a river filled with ships,  
Each with a single light.

First vanishes the city, then the sea,  
And then the plain below the mountain slips  
Into the dark upwelling.

They are lighting gradual lamps in Venily;  
In every winding street, in every dwelling,  
The lights come on with soft surprise,—  
Those are the city's eyes,  
Watching the sky, watching the sea,  
And searching in her heart, where man by man  
Passes the human caravan.

Where are you going, nameless men?  
What is your destination?  
Through Istis and through Nalda we have gone,  
Through many cities; now in Venily  
We rest before new journeyings. And then?  
Back in imagination  
With the receding tide, until the dawn  
Takes us and scatters us upon the sea.

Carmus feels wind-fingers touch his hair,  
The mother's hands soft on the tired child;  
Hands often so severe, and now so mild  
As the farewells rise up the crisp'd air.  
Always at parting time, we are beguiled  
By a nostalgic sorrow; all seems fair  
That lies behind us, and the long despair  
That wept, becomes the brief content that  
          smiled.

Though many men shall die, and few shall live,  
Mortals and deities have common birth;  
Dying, the clay; living, the soul of earth.  
And though the earth herself is fugitive,  
And nursed unprofitable children, she  
Is also mother of immortality.

Out of the marsh where spring by spring  
New reeds take root, arise, flourish, and fade,  
There come the restless immortals, travelling  
Forth to the new horizons, unafraid.  
While the tides pass through the tall grass  
They push through the tangled marts and wars  
Steady as stars through a dance of meteors.

The old man sits in his mountain garden,  
          knowing  
How thin the wall between him and the sun.  
He yields to the memory-haunted breezes  
          blowing  
Him back along the road he journeyed on.  
Behind him rise the black inviolate heights,  
Beneath him, the gold filigree of lights,  
And, to his inner vision, something more.

*As darkness  
comes on, he  
sees ever  
clearer, as  
the memories  
of his life  
return in  
their true  
meaning.*

Memory stretches like a corridor  
Thronged with the busy shadows of his race;—  
Or is it but two mirrors face to face,  
Reflecting to infinity?  
He sees the nations wedged in war,  
Futile expeditions back and forth,  
Thinkers stagnant in philosophy,  
Ships sailing south and north  
Over the sea.

*His immortal  
comrade is  
there, also,  
but he is no  
longer im-  
patient to see  
her, for he  
knows that*

He looks far down the vista, and he knows  
That at the end, unveiled, there waits a form  
Clear as the rain-washed sky after a storm,  
The face of wisdom, the perpetual rose.  
She is the promise of his life fulfilled,  
Godhead, for whom he tried so long to build  
A temple of his life, for whom he went  
Down twilight paths of fear and banishment.

*the hour of  
reunion is  
near,*

He will not raise his eyes to look at her;  
It is enough to know that she is there.  
An hour or two, the earthly scene will blur  
And twinkle out across the thickening air.  
She is the everlasting, if he look  
At once or later, she will be the same.  
His place is marked, and though she close  
the book  
She cannot now efface a deathless name.

“Now while I may, let me behold the glitter  
And dazzling pageant of the world’s bravado,  
For memory makes sweet what once was bitter,  
And over it all hovers the unseen shadow  
Of Her who waits revealed at the end of space.  
I shall not hasten to behold her face;  
She chose me, and she cannot, at the last,  
Cast me away where the charnel dead are  
cast.

*and desires to  
gaze once  
again at the  
unreal  
pageant of  
mortality  
from which he  
has climbed.*

“For I remember now our old communion.  
She is the genius of my discontent;  
The divine half, impatient for reunion;  
And fearing lest the mortal blandishment  
Should come between her and her own re-  
flection  
And so retard her struggle toward perfection,  
She drove me through the land, nor let me  
stay  
In any place, lest I take root in clay.



“Clear voice through all confusion, far and  
thin,

But clear, through all the murk, for ever clear;  
Sometimes so high it climbed to where begin  
Those rarer notes that just escape the ear  
And turn to rainbow green and red and gold;  
Sometimes a deep vibration, slowly rolled  
Under our senses, till in the profound  
Depths of the mind it enters without sound.

“Or in some hushed and holy interval,  
Beside the bed of death, or love’s first waking,  
We start to hear that unexpected call  
Cast like a stone in silent waters, shaking  
The surface of our thoughts to waves that pour  
On, on, to break at last on what far shore?  
Or sometimes in our purer days, we hear  
It like a sudden thrush ring strangely near.

“Now flashing by so we shall not forget,  
Now hiding, lest we should recall too much;  
Drawing us onward without respite, yet  
Keeping just out of hearing, sight and touch.  
Now she demands we sing of her, and from  
Our lyre she strikes the song, and smites us  
dumb;

Until we learn that in the sensuous earth  
Silence alone bespeaks her final worth.

“An immortal casts her images, yet few  
Retain the mark of their celestial race.  
Souls die as well as bodies, and a new  
Image is cast to take the other's place,  
Until there come the man who will not die,  
Who builds a tower of personality  
From the world's best, refined by discontent,  
And justifies divine experiment.

“Then be it known that they are few who live  
Beyond the number of their mortal days.  
Eternal powers avenge not nor forgive.  
Beyond all supplication and all praise  
They cast their shadows on oblivion;  
The shadows pass with life’s uncertain sun;  
Except those strong who cannot be destroyed,  
And in their turn cast shadows down the void.

“At the journey’s end we cry, ‘Why came we  
here?’  
For looking back along the travelled day,  
We see that what we sought in this high sphere  
Was walking at our side the entire way.  
Yet, had we not gone on, should we have seen  
The presence? Would there not have come  
between  
Our eyes and her the subtle tapestry  
Whose patterns seem more beautiful than she?

“Only here from the mountain can we view  
The long perspective of the road we followed;  
Down there, the small was great, the false  
was true,

And all but the dream that drove us on was  
swallowed.

The search itself was its fulfilment; now  
Poised in farewell on earth’s star-crested brow,  
We can afford her our still-eager eyes,  
Nor haste to claim the inevitable prize.

“Earth, I have wandered through you in a  
dream

That kept your fair adventure fresh in bloom;  
Had I surrendered to your smiling scheme,  
Ere this you would have been my wayside  
tomb.

Now are you glorious from the windy height,  
Your cities flowing into lakes of light,  
Your strife subdued, and all your agonies  
Hushed with thin music, overleaved with  
trees.

“It is not to discard you and your joys,—  
Rather to taste them all, but not to stay  
Floating in stagnant water that destroys  
The swiftness of the soul, and clogs its way.  
The beauties of the world are earned and spent  
By one transmuting them with discontent;  
To sing perfection in their outward glance  
Is to deny their last significance.

*With a great  
pity for  
those who  
shall vanish,  
and delight in  
his own  
divinity.*

“You are the veiled one now, for Life unveiled  
Awaits the signal from her brother’s eyes;  
But I am thinking of the seas I sailed,—  
Hear how the ancient winds know me, and  
rise  
Rustling the leaves overhead in the arbour,  
Hoping to tempt the old ship from the  
harbour;  
They are warm and salt, they carry back to  
me  
The drowsy sound of the reeds singing to  
the sea.”



The night wheels through its planetary course  
And cries farewell to the responding trees;  
A rasping motion in the gorse  
Betrays the outposts of the dawn,  
That creep on hands and knees  
Over the mountain, down the valley-lawn.

At last the city sleeps.  
Her lights diffuse into a single taper  
Sinking with night whose vigil one man keeps.

And he still searches the dim corridor,  
Where phantoms vanish from the littered  
    floor,  
Their ghostly lives released  
In the early vapour.

The mountain broods. . . .  
It is silent beneath it, beyond it, and in those  
    woods  
There is silence.

Look to the clear northeast!

The mountain wakes.

*So he watches  
till the Dawn.*

A triangle of infinite colour breaks  
Over the summit.

A voice passes

Singing through the autumn leaves and the  
tall grasses. . . .

Dawn.

*Copenhagen, Denmark.  
November 29, 1920—  
February 24, 1921.*









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